

**Statement by Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad
on CBO's Estimate of Potential Costs of Military Action Against Iraq
September 30, 2002**

Should Congress choose to authorize military action in Iraq, and should the President commit our troops to war, these decisions should be made based on America's national security interests. While the financial costs of military action can be one of many factors to be considered and evaluated, no decision to wage war should ever be made based primarily on the financial cost of such a mission.

As Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, it is helpful to have a rough estimate of what it might cost to wage war in Iraq. But, let's be clear. This debate should not be driven by how much it will cost U.S. taxpayers.

Estimating the cost of a still undefined and undeclared war with Iraq is a difficult undertaking to say the least. I appreciate CBO's good faith effort as the non-partisan office did as good a job as it could, given so many unknown contributing cost factors.

It is important to recognize that the study's authors acknowledge the narrow scope of their own estimate, as CBO did not provide a total cost of war and its implications. The CBO estimate was not designed to be a comprehensive analysis as the study's authors did not include the costs of a variety of miscellaneous factors which range from humanitarian assistance to reconstruction obligations.

Nonetheless, CBO's estimate makes clear that depending on the duration and type of combat operations and the presence, duration and size of the peacekeeping force, costs could range from as little as \$21 billion for a one month heavy air war with no occupation, to more than \$272 billion for three months of combat with a heavy ground force and a five year occupation by a large U.S. force. In the end, based on CBO's analysis, military operations in Iraq could well incur costs in the \$100 billion to \$200 billion range suggested by White House economic advisor Larry Lindsey, earlier this month.